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SONGS OF ARMAGEDDON
AND OTHER POEMS

BY GEORGE SYLVESTER VIERECK

A GAME AT LOVE AND OTHER PLAYS

NINEVEH AND OTHER POEMS

THE HOUSE OF THE VAMPIRE

CONFESSIONS OF A BARBARIAN

THE CANDLE AND THE FLAME

SONGS OF ARMAGEDDON AND OTHER POEMS

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AND OTHER POEMS

BY
GEORGE SYLVESTER VIERECK



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*For Heart's Delight
Night and Day
Light My Way!
Day and Night,
Heart's Delight!*

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THE BOOK OF ARMAGEDDON

I.

SONGS OF ARMAGEDDON

1914—1916

WILHELM II, PRINCE OF PEACE

O PRINCE OF PEACE, O Lord of War,
 Unsheathe thy blade without a stain,
Thy holy wrath shall scatter far
 The bloodhounds from thy country's fane!

Into thy hand the sword is forced
 By traitor friend and traitor foe,
On foot, on sea, and winged and horsed,
 The Prince of Darkness strikes his blow.

Crush thou the Cossack arms that reach
 To plunge the world into the night!
Save Goethe's vision, Luther's speech,
 Thou art the Keeper of the Light!

When darkness was on all the lands,
 Who kept God's faith with courage grim?
Shall He uphold His country's hands,
 Or tear her members, limb from limb?

God called the Teuton to be free,
 Free from Great Britain's golden thrall,
From guillotine and anarchy,
 From pogroms red and whips that fall.

May thy victorious armies rout
 The yellow hordes against thee hurled,

The Czar whose sceptre is the knout,
And France, the harlot of the world!

But thy great task will not be done
Until thou vanquish utterly
The Norman sister of the Hun,
England, the Serpent of the Sea.

The flame of war her tradesmen fanned
Shall yet consume her, fleet and field:
The star of Frederick guide thy hand,
The God of Bismarck be thy shield!

Against the fell Barbarian horde
Thy people stand, a living wall;
Now fight for God's peace with thy sword,
For if thou fail, a world shall fall!

THE IRON CHANCELLOR

ABOVE the grave where Bismarck sleeps
The ravens screeched with strange alarms,
The Saxon forest in its deeps
Shook with the distant clash of arms.

The Iron Chancellor stirred. “ ’Tis war!
Give me my sword to lay them low
Who touch my work. Unbar the door
I passed an hundred years ago.”

The angel guardian of the tomb
Spake of the law that binds all clay,
That neither rose nor oak may bloom
Betwixt the night and judgment day.

“ For no man twice may pass this gate,”
He said. But Bismarck flashed his eyes:
“ Nay, at the trumpet call of fate,
Like Barbarossa, I shall rise.

“ In sight of all God’s Seraphim
I’ll place this helmet on my brow.
For lo! We Germans fear but Him,
And He, I know, is with us now.”

The dead man stood up in his might,
The startled angel said no word.

Through endless spheres of day and night
God in His Seventh Heaven heard.

And answered thus: "Shall man forget
My laws? They were not lightly made,
Nor writ for thee to break. And yet
I love thee. Thou art not afraid.

"Bismarck, from now till morrow's sun
Walk as a wraith amid the strife,
And if thou find thy work undone
Come back, and I shall give thee — life."

With stern salute the spectre strode
Out of the dark into the dawn.
From Hamburg to the Caspian road
He saw a wall of iron drawn.

He saw young men go forth to die
Singing the martial songs of yore.
Boldly athwart the Flemish sky
He marked the German airmen soar.

A thousand spears in battle line
Had pierced the wayward heart of France,
But still above the German Rhine
The Walkyrs held their sacred dance.

He saw the sidling submarine
Wrest the green trident from the hold
Of her whose craven tradesmen lean
On yellow men and yellow gold.

In labyrinths of blood and sand
He watched ten Russian legions drown.
Unseen he shook the doughty hand
Of Hindenburg near Warsaw town.

The living felt his presence when,
Paternal blessing, he drew nigh,
And all the dead and dying men
Saluted him as he passed by.

But he rode back in silent thought,
And from his great heart burst a sigh
Of thanks. "The Master Craftsman wrought
This mighty edifice, not I.

"No hostile hoof shall ever fall
Upon my country's sacred sod;
Though seven whirlwinds lash its wall,
It stands erect, a rock of God.

"I shall return unto my bed,
Nor ask of life a second lease,

My spirit lives, though I be dead,
My aching bones may rest in peace."

Up to his chin he drew the shroud,
To wait God's judgment patiently,
While high above a blood-red cloud
Two eagles screamed of victory.

THE GERMAN AMERICAN TO HIS ADOPTED COUNTRY

THE great guns crashing angrily
Sound, distant echoes, in our ear.
We pray for those beyond the sea
Whose lives to us are very dear.

We catch a mother's smile. We seize
In thought a father's hand again.
We see the house and through the trees
A girl's face in the window pane.

May God above them stretch His hand,
For men are mowed as fields of rye.
Destruction rides on sea and land
Or drops, like thunder, from the sky.

Columbia, though thou shed no tear,
Shall they fan hate with evil breath
Half-witted, scribbling fools who sneer
While these our brothers go to death?

Upon their page with hellish glee
They prance their joy in black and red,
While Teutons strike for liberty
And Teuton mothers count their dead.

While Death and warring Cherubim
O'er blood-red fields of battle flit,

Upon the shining mail of him
Who leads God's hosts, they puke their wit.

Shall these that are thy children fling
Their gibes upon our brothers' scars?
We taught our hearts thy songs to sing,
Aye, with our blood we waged thy wars.

We fought thy fight when Britain's paw
Upon thy country's heart was laid,
When the French eagle's iron claw
Perturbed great Montezuma's shade.

The dry bones of our kinsmen rot
In Gettysburg. Was it for this?
Are Schurz and Steuben both forgot?
Nay, thine is not a traitor's kiss.

Let not thy words belie the right,
Turn not from them that are thy kin!
Thy starry crown will shine less bright
If freemen lose, if Cossacks win.

The Red Czar's blight shall never fall
Upon the earth, nor freedom pale,
While the white blade of Parzival
Still guards the Teuton's Holy Grail!

THE NEUTRAL

THOU who canst stop this slaughter if thou wilt,
Lo, how with death we freight the unwilling sea!
Lift up thy voice to end this infamy:
Hands may be blood-stained that no blood have spilt.
Into a people's heart, yea to the hilt,
Is plunged the sword of thy Neutrality.
Though each wave bring some golden argosy,
Each on our souls heaps a new load of guilt.

Curses for us commingle with the tears
Of anguished mothers. Man, hast thou no ears?
Upon these harbors falls a streak of red
From Europe's carnage. In the long night-tide
Canst thou not see them marching side by side,
The mute accusing army of the dead?

TEAR from thy brow the olive wreath!
Thy laughter sickens to a leer:
Behold thy honor fall beneath
The hammer of the auctioneer.
Now Cain shall claim thee for his own
And Judas keep thee company.
Hell, when the blackest deeds are known,
Shall hail the name of Italy.

These are not Cæsar's Seven Hills,
Nor this the land that Dante trod;
A breed of ingrates plagued with ills,
To mankind traitor and to God.
Vesuvius speak with molten lead,
Roll on her plains thy fiery sea
And, save for her immortal dead,
Wipe out the name of Italy!

Oh, Holy Father, held in gyves,
They stray too far from out thy fold,
These hucksters of their children's lives
Who sold their souls for British gold!
Pray for them, for Thy heart is kind,
And where no mortal eye can see
Perhaps God's mercy still may find
A spark of shame in Italy.

She gave her brothers stone for bread;
Now through her towns shall ride the Goth,
And ruined valleys drenched with red
Remind her of her broken troth.
The Teuton thundering through the land
Shall set God's prisoned shepherd free,
But thou shalt wear the scarlet band
Of England's strumpet, Italy!

*DEUTSCHLAND, DEUTSCHLAND, LAND OF
ALL LANDS*

From the German of Hoffman von Fallersleben

DEUTSCHLAND, Deutschland, land of all lands,
First and foremost in the world,
When thy children face united
Every foe against thee hurled,
From the Meuse unto the Memel,
To the sea, with flags unfurled:
Deutschland, Deutschland, land of all lands,
First and foremost in the world!

German troth and German women,
German wine and German song,
Shall retain their ancient glamour,
Though the years be dark and long;
Noble deeds they shall inspire
In our hearts, and make us strong:
German troth and German women,
German wine and German song.

Brotherhood and right and freedom
Bless thee, German Fatherland,
For this goal we strive together,
One and all, with heart and hand;

For upon these mighty pillars
Evermore thy weal must stand:
Bloom and flourish in that glory,
Flourish, German Fatherland!

THE BOOK OF ARMAGEDDON

II.

ARMAGEDDON, CHICAGO

1912

THE HYMN OF ARMAGEDDON

"And I stood upon the sands of the sea, and I saw a beast rise up out of the sea, having seven heads. . . . And he gathered them together into a place called in the Hebrew tongue Armageddon. . . . And the great city was divided into three parts."

The Apocalypse.

APOCALYPTIC thunders roll out of the crimson East:

The Day of Judgment is at hand, and we shall slay the Beast.

What are the seven heads of him, the Beast that shall be slain?

Sullivan, Taggart, Lorimer, Barnes, Penrose, Murphy, Crane.

Into what cities leads his trail in venom steeped and gore?
Ask Frisco, ask Chicago, mark New York and Baltimore.
Where shall we wage the battle, for whom unsheath the sword?

We stand at Armageddon and we battle for the Lord!

Though hell spit forth its snarling host we shall not flinch
nor quail,

For in the last great skirmish God's own truth must prevail.

Have they not seen the writing that flames upon the wall,

Of how their house is built on sand, and how their pride
must fall?

The cough of little lads that sweat where never sun sheds
light,

The sob of starving children and their mothers in the
night,

These, and the wrong of ages, we carry as a sword,
Who stand at Armageddon and who battle for the Lord!

God's soldiers from the West are we, from North, and
East and South,

The seed of them who flung the tea into the harbor's
mouth,

And those who fought where Grant fought and those
who fought with Lee,

And those who under alien stars first dreamed of liberty.
Not those of little faith whose speech is soft, whose ways
are dark,

Nor those upon whose forehead the Beast has set his mark,
Out of the Hand of Justice we snatch her faltering
sword,

We stand at Armageddon and we battle for the Lord!

The sternest militant of God whose trumpet in the fray
Has cleft the city into three shall lead us on this day.
The holy strength that David had is his, the faith that
saves,

For he shall free the toilers as Abe Lincoln freed the slaves.

And he shall rouse the lukewarm and those whose eyes are dim,

The hope of twenty centuries has found a voice in him.

Because the Beast shall froth with wrath and perish by his sword

He leads at Armageddon the legions of the Lord!

For he shall move the mountains that groan with ancient sham,

And mete with equal measure to the lion and the lamb.

And he shall wipe away the tears that burn on woman's cheek,

For in the nation's council hence the mothers too, shall speak.

Through him the rose of peace shall blow from the red rose of strife,

America shall write his name into the Book of Life.

And where at Armageddon we battle with the sword

Shall rise the mystic commonwealth, the City of the Lord!

*SONG AGAINST NIPPON: TO HIRAM
JOHNSON*

HAIL, dauntless leader stout of heart,
Stern guardian of the White God's rule!
Abroad — from Nippon's wily art,
At home — from craven lout and fool!

Though Asia's squadrons wax by sevens,
Our boards shall never spread their feast,
These mirthless sons of godless heavens,
Grim vanguards of the swarming East!

Upon our heritage of pains
Their heavy sins shall not be hurled,
Their stunted trees and stunted brains,
The burden of their Yellow World.

What of their kinsmen wont to roam
The earth upon the steeds of hell?
They were God's Scourge! Before them Rome
Quaked, and her holy altars fell.

But Attila is dead! And he
Would not be bold to tempt his fate
And lead their hosts across the sea,
While California holds the Gate!

And while Christ's sunrise crowns His morn,
While we have arms to spike their guns,
We laugh their Shogun threats to scorn,
We shall not cringe before these Huns!

We have one destiny; in them
The Forty-Seven Ronins dwell;
Not theirs the star of Bethlehem,
Not theirs the White Man's Citadel!

For yellow toil the yellow dross,
But not an inch of native sod!
Above the flag we plant the Cross,
We are the paladins of God!

THE BOOK OF THE DEAD

THE CONQUEROR

*"I, John Pierpont Morgan,
... commit my soul into the
hands of my Savior, in full
confidence that having redeemed
and washed it in His most pre-
cious blood He will present it
faultless before the throne of my
Heavenly Father."*

*— The Last Will and Testa-
ment of John Pierpont Morgan.*

WHEN all was silent and the gloom
Grew thick, the dead man rose. The mask
Slipped. Loath to tarry in the room,
He glanced not at the agate casque;

Nor at his tapestries, his scrolls,
The ransom of an hundred kings —
For he that conquers life, his soul's
Wraith is not chained to mundane things.

His cane with slow, deliberate care
Swinging, along the street moved he,
Until he reached the Golden Stair
That only dead men's eyes may see.

Of newly dead a spirit host
Made low obeisance when he came.
Though some be saved and some be lost,
He was the Master of the Game

In life and death. A grunt, a nod,
Thanked them. They nudged each other's sides
For each was fettered to the sod
By some earth memory. A bride's

Caress. A lad's clean limbs. The sheen
In a child's face. A battle won.
A crime. A dream. What might have been.
— August, untroubled he passed on.

He puffed at his cigar. The spheres
Made music. Then the ceaseless drone
Of prayer went up. By myriad tiers
Encircled rose the Holy Throne.

With no uncertainty of fate
He brushed aside the angel throng
And strode through the emblazoned gate
Into the Heaven of the Strong.

HUERTA

A MAN of destiny. A sword.
No old maid's morals dulled his aim.
He nailed the cheat upon the board,
Then, stolid Indian, quit the game.

Nursed in men's blood by iron years,
Though red his hands, though short his span —
We raise our glass in silence: Here's
No text-book pedant, but a man.

THEY brought his body to the shore
Across a thousand leagues of sea,
Like to some merchant prince of yore,
A master of the things that be.

Though vanquished in the final strife,
He was a victor, for he passed
Not the grim threshold till from life
He wrung its bounties to the last.

And gazing back upon his span
At eve, he saw and was content:
His day was worthy of a man,
A faithful steward's, wisely spent.

Death, though it slew him, left no sting:
He conquered fortune and he won
Men's hearts. Then, spare your tears, and bring
Bright garlands garnered in the sun!

Not downcast mien nor gloomy thought,
But gladness and the song of birds,
The memory of his deeds well-wrought,
His gentle smile, his kindly words.

Great was his soul. He gave thereof,
He clung not to the golden clod
And, through the miracle of love,
Rose, spite that Needle's Eye, to God.

*THE BOOK OF HELEN AND
MARGUERITE*

*“ I have loved Helen of Troy
and the blonde Marguerite ”*

DR. FAUST'S DESCENT FROM HEAVEN

I

THOUGH your womb be the mother of bliss, O
Earth, and the mother of woes,
Though your large hands be full of the strange gifts of
life, the kiss, and the worm, and the rose,
The thunders that break from the sky of fate, and the
flash in the pan,
To me they are empty, for I know all things encompassed
of man.
The devious desires that crouch through the brain like
monsters that nest in the sea,
Pass — pageants of ghosts — through the luminous eyes
of one who is dear to me.
The other — all pangs and delights of the visible world
and its quests,
Are engraved in the exquisite curve of her throat and the
hieroglyphs of her breasts.
One rides on the wingèd chimæra of dreams through æons
purple and red,
The other — like new-mown grass is the scent of her flesh
in my bed.
What can you give me of joy, Earth, what of bitter and
sweet?
I have loved Helen of Troy and the blonde Marguerite.

II

Straightforth with the Magical Seal I knocked at the
musical gates

Of Heaven. The angels grew pale, or swooned in the
arms of their mates.

"I have sounded all chords in the harp of man's life," I
said,

"It is I, Doctor Faust. Now give me your manna for
bread."

And they gave me their manna to eat, and drink, and I
drank thereof,

But they tasted as ashes and stale in my mouth after the
kisses of love.

So I spake up to God: "In your realm, O Lord, there is
nothing to do

For a man such as I. Let me pass. T'were different if
I could be you!

To play with omnipotence, curb lightnings, and summon
new worlds at my will —

Yet I stretch out no impious hand for your kingdom. I,
too, have my fill.

Though the suns be your toy, of Love's breasts have I
joy, though the prayer of the saints be your meat,

*Have you loved Helen of Troy and the blonde Mar-
guerite?*

III

Into Inferno I stalked to the stream where sulphur and
brimstone well

Through lonelinesses more deep than the Florentine's
Frozen Hell.

I came to the nethermost place where Satan sate in splen-
dor alone,

The writhing limbs of anguished men were the pillars
of his throne.

His court was paved with dead men's hopes stamped like
designs into mud,

From thousand scarlet candles came the drip of human
blood.

In his eyes were all the tortures of all nights barren and
fever-tossed

Of all who loved and won and all who loved and lost.

And I grasped the hand of the Prince of Hell: "O
brother once divine,

Lo, all your thorns have pierced my side and all your
hells were mine.

Thorns of flame that destroy, remorse, with slow but in-
fallible feet:

I have loved Helen of Troy and the blonde Marguerite.

IV

From the lesser gods to their masters, Time and Eternity,
I turned — to crave the single boon that they could give
to me.

“ I am the Pilgrim of Passion who ever must choose and
grieve

Between the earth-born daughters of Lilith and of Eve.
For I have lost my way twixt Heaven and Hell and
Earth,

Give me oblivion,” I said, “ or grant me another birth!
Grant me another encasement where the flesh shall be the
soul,

Where good shall be as evil and pole as antipole.

Let Lilith and her sister, both back into night be thrust,
Fashion Woman anew out of their astral dust.

Dreams of impossible joy and impossible loveliness meet
*When beautiful Helen of Troy shall be one with the
blonde Marguerite.”*

VENUS AMERICANA

Tannhaeuser speaks:

TIME'S famished mouth is choked with sands,
But I, thy knight, have made no gain,
Save tribulations of the hands,
And fierce caresses of the brain.

Once more the Magic Mound is rent,
My feet, but not for Rome, depart
From hectic lusts that die unspent,
The sterile orchids of thy heart.

Ten thousand years and lovers tire
Even the gods. They wrought such change
That the Greek wine of thy desire
Has turned to absinthe, drugged and strange.

Thou art a captive of thy spleen
Within thy golden House of Mirth,
Borne in a shimmering limousine,
Thy small feet never touch the earth.

Fear and earth-strange nerve fibres pull
Thy heart-strings by an unseen wire
From the fruition of love's full
Delight. Thy brain alone is fire.

But though thy body's loveliness
Pin man's heart like a butterfly,

I shall not sell my soul for less
Than love for love, than eye for eye.

Such pleasure as Prince Paris had
To whom thy pulses sang out sweet,
And many a brown Sicilian lad —
The ungirt loin, the sun-kissed feet!

My love's too dear a thing, I ween,
To thrill an empty mood of thine,
Drowned like that pearl the dusky queen
Dissolved in dark Egyptian wine.

Neurotic Venus, from thy cave
Come into God's air, salt and fresh,
Or snatch from some Hellenic grave
The splendid courage of the flesh!

LOVE IN A ZEPPELIN

BELOW us rolled the earth. We were
Like clouds above the dust and din.

We heard Saint Peter's violin,
For Heaven's gate drew near us there:

We rode upon the Zeppelin,
The strong-ribbed dolphin of the air.

A magic carpet was the plain,
Men crawled like ants that seemed to doze.

A thousand poplars stood in rows
Like soldiers marching in a lane.

Your mouth, the envy of the rose,
Drank in the sunshine like champagne.

And then the glass grew bright for us
With wine. Like happy boy and maid

We drank to all hearts unafraid
Who bravely walk the perilous

Ways of the air to shame the shade
Of Phaethon and Icarus.

Leander for his Love's sake hurled
Himself into the deep, but I

More blessed than Hero's lover, fly
Above green meadows dew-bepearled,

While at my side I clasp on high
The fairest lady in the world.

God's lifted finger, looms a spire,
And now the city's windows gleam.
Our shadow races with the stream
And still the ship climbs high and higher,
But not so high as soars my dream,
But not so swift as my desire.

My lady laughs. Oh Cruel One:
All ships pay toll unto the sea,
But I can build a craft for thee,
That earth itself shall not outrun,
And lift on wings of melody
My heart's desire to the sun.

All ships pay toll unto the sea,
Death sounds the last bell of delight;
Like the earth earthy, and the night,
Love's pleasant face at last shall be:
But she who shares a poet's flight
May share his immortality.

A BALLAD OF SAINT VITUS

GIRLS fidget with their fans. Scarce heard,
The mummers pause. The curtain rings.
Desire, like an uncouth bird,
Against the playhouse flaps huge wings.
The crowds, like crazy silhouettes,
Reel to a tune more fierce than gay
From thousand frantic cabarets —
Saint Vitus stalks along Broadway.

This is the turkey trot. The Saint
Spurs them. They mimic, scared of peace,
Till the last blazing billboards faint,
The mad gyrations of Maurice.
When from wan sleep they start, the drug
Still whips their blood. Thus night and day,
With tango, grapevine, bunny-hug,
Saint Vitus trots along Broadway.

And yet — why not? Tomorrow closes
The door of life and ends my rime,
And where Milady pins my roses
The worm will leave a trail of slime.
New bacchants wheel to measures new —
Who shall remember Gaby's sway?
And who shall think of us, of you
And me, along the mad White Way?

L'Envoi

Dear, Death the fowler spreads his net,
And lovely limbs are made of clay;
Our dust shall twitch with vain regret
If love we seize not while we may:
Prince Vitus stalks along Broadway!

VENGEANCE

THIS is the self-same Gilded Inn
Where oft I waited wearily,
But you — you had your tango tea,
And love was slaughtered for a spin.

Another, in apparel gay,
Holds hands now and sips mint with me,
And you may dance your tango tea,
Like Herod's wife, till Judgment Day!

A VAGABOND

SWEET vagabond, I hardly know
Your mother's tongue, your father's name,
For even as a dream you came,
And even as a dream you go.

My heart shall hold your gift of love
Dear, till I sleep the ground beneath,
Though the white scallops of your teeth
Shall be my only proof thereof.

THE LOVE SEAL

A SILVER sea beneath the stars —
We paid to love his mystic rites,
And from thy lips I kissed the scars
Of fiercer joys and stranger nights.

What redder lips, what mouth of fate,
Till Buddha noddeth near the goal,
Shall, stronger still, obliterate
My one night's madness from thy soul?

I brand thee through eternity,
Upon thy blood I set my seal,
And boy and girl and change and sea
Cannot wipe out my mark or heal.

While the great life-snake sheds its coat,
I must rehearse my tragic part,
To kiss the love-wounds from thy throat,
And burn the iron in thy — heart.

PIERROT CRUCIFIEL

FROM what moon-meadow shall we cull
The honey of Theocritus?
Earth holds but little cheer for us,
All tender blossoms dear to us
Life tramples like a maddened bull.
Therefore thy mouth is amorous
But of some strange red dream that was,
O infinitely beautiful,
And infinitely piteous!

What vague progenitors affirm
Through thee some perished Circe's art,
And plant the deadly cankerworm
In the white rose that is thy heart?
Bid to the banquets of my brain
By what ancestral prompter's cue
Hie hooded shapes of sin and pain,
With all their ghastly retinue?

What girl whose lips were sweet to hire,
Bruised with what kisses that destroy,
What frail, pale lad who played with fire
And made of love a barren toy,
What hoary grim voluptuary
Who hunted pleasure as his quarry,
Foredrained the cup of my desire,
And spilt unpoured thy wine of joy?

Was there a dim pre-natal hour
Ere spear-armed fancies sallied hence,
Like priests of Baal, to deflower
Thine unpolluted innocence?
What goddess mad with what strange ire
Fills stainless heart of maid or boy
With the love-weariness of Tyre
And all the secret lusts of Troy
That smoulder in life's dismal pyre?

Madonna nailed unto the tree
Of some perverse fatality
For sins of others long ago,
Thou art my tragic Columbine,
I am thy tearful Pierrot!
But being human, not divine,
There are two masters strong enough
To make us glad, and one is Love.
The other has a fetid breath . . .

Ah let him tarry! Choose not — Death!
From my own Calvary I scanned
Thy sorrow. I am love. My hand
Holds the great chalice red with wine,
And my young soul is seared as thine!

The self-same sword has pierced my side,
With the same lusts my blood abounds,
And I must love thee for thy wounds
Because I too am crucified.

BETRAYAL

LIFE cheated me, and from her golden purse
Drew forth the lead of promise half-fulfilled,
The dice was loaded that love's own hand spilled,
And every throw of friendship was a curse.
And so my dreams grew ashen as a wraith,
With haggard eyes my songs began to tire:
Our spirit-compact, free from earth desire,
Was the last pillar of my battered faith.

Then for the lifting of a lash, your hand
Withdrew; you wavered weakly, and we fell;
A moment's doubt may send a soul to hell,
A moment's earthquake devastate a land.
And deep contrition cannot now nor art
Rebuild the ruined mansion of my heart.

REPENTANCE

HOT tears of anger wash my cheek like rain,
Am I a slave then, whom the laws control,
Abject and old, unreverenced? — My soul
I sought to free from fetters, and again
I hear the clanging of that prison chain
That the dead years upon our lives impose,
Which still to bind a thousand prophets rose,
And which to break full thousand died in vain.

I have offended, yea, and suddenly
Things that I thought long stifled rise in me,
And though I know there be not right nor wrong,
That the proud pillars of our faith must fall;
Yet by my weakness grows repentance strong,
With my own hands I clutch the cup of gall!

THE SCAPEGOAT

AND so you often speak of me
When in his arms he holds the treasure
That once was mine? What memory
Stalks through your brain? What ghost of pleasure?

But must you tell him every thrill
And all my nakedness uncover?
Ah, you are subtle, for he will
Thus be vicariously the lover

Of your red past. But can he hear
The whole strange truth and never falter?
And will you whisper in his ear
Love's Black Mass and the secret Psalter?

We summoned from the popped dead
Hecate and the dreams that she brews.
Now all these sins are on his head,
As on the scapegoat of the Hebrews.

Though he win Lilith for his bride,
He also wins the scarlet nightmare
That plagued my soul, while free I ride
Into the dawn upon my white mare.

THE CHALLENGE

“**I** CHALLENGE you!” you said to me
The curtain parts. You enter in.
A dream of pink and ivory
Through the soft satin peeps your skin.

Before me, in defiance bold,
Now all your little being stands.
Your breasts like two small birds I hold —
I feel their heart-beats with my hands.

But in your eyes there is no dread:
A little animal at play
You cuddle up within my bed,
And simply will not go away.

Perhaps some sober Puritan
Would take your tender ways amiss,
I am not marble, but a man —
Worlds have been bartered for a kiss.

And though but now your hand and eye
Upon forbidden ways have strayed,
Against the damask sheet you lie
More like a flower than a maid.

How white are you, how brown am I,
My lily girl! My midnight rose!

How delicate against my thigh
Is the indenture of your toes.

No after-savors mar your lips
With memories of past delight,
Save phantom lads who come on ships
Of dreams to little girls at night.

A thornless rose of memory
Shall be this strange night's white caress.
My love with you deals tenderly,
And life, I pray will do no less.

"Is this not love's way, even so?"
You ask and smile triumphantly,
And know not that still home you go
With all your young virginity.

Scat, little kitten, nor delay,
While there, as yet, is naught to rue!
The city swarms with beasts of prey
Who lie in wait for such as you.

Avaunt, incredible gamin!
You have no right at all to be,
Save in the sculptures of Rodin,
Or else — in Greek mythology.

THE DREAMER

HE dreams. The scented breath of June
Fans his bare limbs. He softly sighs,
And still more softly smiles. His eyes
Through closed lids gaze into the moon.

Now the boy's arms enfold the air,
His pulses quicken with delight:
For through the casements of the night
A dream-girl floats with burnished hair.

The gold of silken locks is spread
Above him like a coverlet.
His lips, now curved with passion, fret
The milk-white down where lies his head.

Can maid of flesh be half so sweet?
She knows no fear. She asks no gain,
Nor of her roses winds a chain
For Love to drag with weary feet.

And now her phantom hands caress
His youth. Her kisses fall like rain.
And stabs of pleasure kin to pain
Perturb his rose-pink nakedness.

His breath comes fast. Desire shakes
His blood. In amorous eclipse
The whole world lies between the hips
Of love. He moans. He swoons. He wakes.

THE DOUBLES

WHEN I consider how love works us wrong,
And from delight forever trouble borrows,
Then this shall be the burden of my song:
Mother of Love, thou art the Mother of Sorrows!

But when I witness how the selfsame cross
Borne by two hearts may make but one thereof,
I must confess my logic at a loss:
Mother of Sorrows, thou art the Mother of Love!

Learn this to-day, and thou hast learned enough,
The fool himself will learn it on the morrow:
That Sorrow is the other self of Love,
And Love is but another name for Sorrow!

THE REBEL

YOUR far-off smile is proof that we
Are strangers, Love a subtle liar:
It is not you who long for me,
It is not I whom you desire.

With the grim hunger of that plant
Whose tendrils round its prey are thrown,
You clutch my heart: your red lips pant
With a fierce purpose not your own.

Deep in your breast an alien Power
Lurks for me, patient as the fates,
Or as the love-mouth of the flower
For the appointed pollen waits.

Like to some slimy incubus
It rises from the primal main;
Its horrid fangs will make of us
Blind links in an unending chain.

The ancient chain of blood and tears
And all men's dreams who dreamed in vain!
Must we prolong through weary years
The never ceasing curse of Cain?

An hundred generations toiled
And loved and sweated and begot,

To cast their breads on waters soiled,
And recreate the brute — for what?

The evil leer, the sullen frown,
The apish jowl, the smile inane —
To drag this precious burden down
The long road — was it worth the pain?

And even we, what can we bring?
A thousand ills are on us all,
Where is the pleasure without sting,
Where is the honey without gall?

Instead of gods above the strife
Who dream of some transcendant goal,
Shall we be instruments of life,
To save the body, slave the soul?

Shall we not dare to pluck life's sweet,
But smash the tablets of its rule?
Must I who sate at wisdom's feet
End as all men must end — Love's Fool?

My heart, a scarlet butterfly,
Through scented groves was wont to whirl.
Shall I be prisoned by the sly
Ways of the immemorial girl?

Shall my songs perish that an heir
Live to renew the curse of old?
I know not. But God damn your hair
That through my fingers runs like gold! . . .

Shall I, Lord of a thousand quests,
Succumb unto your blood's commands?
I know not. But God damn your breasts!
They are like rosebuds in my hands! . . .

Those lips, those lines, that smile, those eyes,
Love's lovely traps, God damn them all! . . .
O Life-Force thou art very wise,
Thou art an artist. I shall fall.

THE END

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